

Ambassadors For Christ

Text; 2 Cor; 5:20

So we are ambassadors for Christ, God making His appeal through us. We beseech you on behalf of Christ to be reconciled to God.

In most of the Churches of our denomination today is being observed as Laymens Sunday. As most of you know this is one Sunday in October which is set apart to afford laymen the opportunity to conduct the worship service. This is not done to merely give the pastor a Sunday off, nor is it to give a laymen a chance to get up and spout off. But the real purpose is to have a set theme and the theme is then to be presented by the lay speaker to make the congregation ^{AWARE} of their responsibilities as laymen witnessing for Christ. I think most of you can remember back several years and recall some of the themes that were used. A lot of these involved quoting figures as to how much was given to missions, world relief and so on. Nothing can be more boring than being forced to listen to something like this. The committee in charge must have been made aware of this situation because the emphasis for the past few years has been on subjects which bring forth a challenge both to the speaker and to the congregation. As we heard read in our Scripture lesson Paul states in his letter to the Corinthians, "We are ambassadors for Christ." This is the theme for this years "Laymens Sunday."

As we ponder this text I think it asks the question, "What is Paul trying to say?" Does he mean that we are to be representatives such as our government ambassadors are? Or is he merely using this word for lack of a better one? To answer this question would indeed be difficult, because to try to reason as to what someone else is thinking is almost impossible. The most logical thing to do would be to find out the meaning of the word and take it from there. Webster defines the word ambassador as an official herald, a messenger or an agent with a special mission. Are we then to assume that this is what Paul had in mind? I think we can safely answer in the affirmative.

But if we are to be official heralds or agents with a special mission we should know what that mission is before we can perform our duties. Therefore our first task should be to become knowledgeable about our mission. The best resource we can turn to for this knowledge is the Bible. We can read not only the gospels but Paul's letters to gain the knowledge we need for this mission. Then we ^{SHOULD} try reading what some of the leading Theologians are saying today. But you say you do not have the time to read? We can ^{ALL} say this but if we really want to we can find the time. This may sound like a rather stupid remark to make because after all I don't really know your schedules do I? But you see I said the same thing before I became involved in this Lay Ministry Program. I was sure I couldn't possibly squeeze in a half hour a day for reading. But I have found the time and now I try to read something every day. Which proves we can do it if we want to. Some of the leaders of our Churches today have made the statement that Church people do not read even their Bibles and are therefore pretty vague about what being a Christian is. It isn't necessary to have a degree to know this. But many people do not take the time to broaden their religious life by some means other than attending Church. We should attend church regularly. Not because it is the thing to do, but because we need to worship God. But our Christian knowledge should not stop with Sunday worship. This should be the beginning and the rest of the week we can strive to increase our knowledge of Christ in order to be an effective witness for Him. We should be well enough versed in our Christianity that we come to know Christ intimately. By this I mean that He should be as close to us as the members of our families are. This can only be done by constantly seeking after Him. The story is told of a manned balloon landing in field in the deep south. A group of negroes were picking cotton. They were unfamiliar with planes and balloons so naturally they were frightened and ran. All except one old man who was either too frightened or unable to run. When the balloon came close enough to the old man that he could see the pilot he

raised his hat and shouted, "Good morning Master Jesus, how's your Pa?"
 So it is with us we need to know the Son well enough that we can do His mission.

II

Next we need to transmit this knowledge we have in order to fulfill our mission. The transmitting of this knowledge should be to our fellow man. This would include not only our friends and acquaintances but everyone with whom we come in contact. Or do we think as many people that we should only be concerned with the other members of the Church? Here again Christ admonishes us rather strongly when He says that we shouldn't just love those who love us, for what reward is there in that? He states that we should love those who do not love us. In other words the outsider. Billy Graham in his latest book, "World Aflame" states, "Not only does the Christian follow Christ and learn of Him, but he must also act. The world judges the Christian by his life, not by his belief." Unquote. How many people have each one of come in contact with this past week? How many of them were sad, discouraged, down-hearted and full of bitterness? And how many of them have we given comfort to and shown Christian concern for? How many of them have we given a pat on the back or a word of encouragement or a word about God and how He helps us through life? If we passed them by or ignored them then we are failing to transmit our mission to others. Each one of us has many opportunities during a day, a week and a lifetime for that matter. Most of us probably work with people daily that we could help. Do we? Or are we sort of embarrassed to mention something such as religion? Or too embarrassed to mention Christ? Here again Christ had something definite to say on this subject. He tells us that if we are ashamed to confess Him before men, then He will not confess us before God. So you see telling others of Christ is not only something we can do, it's something we should do. We can never hope to transmit the word if we keep silent. And isn't the story of Jesus Christ worth telling? Benjamin Franklin when asked what he thought about Jesus ~~stated~~ ^{STATED} quote.

"As to Jesus of Nazareth, my opinion of whom you particularly desire, I think the system of morals and His religion as He left them to us, is the best the world ever saw or is likely to see." Unquote. Most Christians probably believe this as Benjamin Franklin did. But believing it and spreading His message is two different things.

III

Our next responsibility as an ambassador for Christ is commitment to the cause. We commit ourselves to many things in our lifetime. But many of us can never seem to get around to really committing ourselves to Christ. Perhaps we are like the man who said he had a lot more time to live and therefore he could always come to Christ even if it was right before he died. We take time so much for granted. It means very little to us. Yet if we stop to think how swiftly time passes we realize that we are each one nearing our appointed departure from this life. This applies to all of us. It's inescapable. With each tick of the clock we come that much closer. But we live our lives as though we shall live on this earth forever. We put our money in the bank for a nest egg. We invest in stocks and bonds for our retirement. We pay into social security for our old age. With all of this we therefore assume that we will all reach retirement age. Unfortunately this is not the case; Not everyone makes it to 65. So wouldn't it be as wise an investment to lay up for ourselves treasure in heaven? If we commit ourselves and our lives to Christ we will be doing this. Too many Christians seem to feel or believe that this is strictly a one operation deal. If we serve in the Church School for a year or so that is enough. If we serve on Council for one term we have done our share. But is it? Our commitment to Christ is for a lifetime. Not just part of it, or half of it, or just a couple years. It's for life. Can we find anywhere in the Gospels where Christ sets a time limit on our service. We know we cant but this is how some people feel. As a result we not only become complacent in our Churches, but the Churches find themselves hard pressed for

Mrs. R. L. FRAZIER, DIRECTOR OF MUSIC

* ASCRIPTION - CHORAL AMEN - INTROIT - EXHORTATION

SCRIPTURE: 2 Cor. 5: 11-21

- - - - - * CONGREGATION STANDING - - - - -

CHILDREN'S HOME, GREENVILLE, WED. OCT. 27TH. 10:00 TO
3:00 BRING A SACK LUNCH

SPECIAL THANKS TO ALL THE GOOD HELPERS FOR THE SOUP AND SALAD SUPPER - THIS HAS BEEN THE MOST SUCCESSFUL



TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

October 8, 1967

Laity Sunday

John 15:1-8

The term "laity" from the Greek word *laos* means people, and in the Bible it means the whole people of God. The church is not a people where only some are to be faithful. Each member, as a branch joined to the true vine of Christ, is intended for fruit-bearing, the fruit of loving one another and giving himself for the sake of others. Because Christ himself bore such fruit, it is in our bearing such fruit also that we show our attachment to him. Then we are his disciples not only in name but also in deed, and it is the deed that is convincing.

MEET MAP

Meet the Metropolitan Associates of Philadelphia. Now completing its second year of existence, MAP is an ecumenical project sponsored by the American Baptists, Episcopalians, Lutherans, and the United Church of Christ.

Most of MAP's 50 to 60 members are laymen—lawyers, businessmen, brokers, teachers, government personnel, labor officials. To them MAP means providing a Christian "presence" in the institutions in which they work. "The nature of MAP's ministry in these institutions and structures," says Dr. Jitsuo Morikawa, executive director of MAP, "is to bring illumination, provocation and summoning to their calling and vocation." To be present in the field of metropolitan daily newspapers, for example, is not to set up a separate church press, but to prompt the existing papers to do their job.

MAP is present in six sectors of community life: arts and education, health, social organizations, politics and government, business and industry, and physical development. Members meet regularly to exchange information within and between sectors. In addition to the laymen who are involved, MAP's staff includes five "urban agents," ordained ministers related to the sectors, and nine "worker ministers" working at secular vocations and paid by secular employers.

In a way, Metropolitan Associates is a computer-age extension of the French worker-priest idea with one important difference. MAP believes that laymen, too, must represent the church if it is to bring illumination to the workaday world of men. Theological perspective, social science insights and the vital issues of life are all focused in MAP.

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